



# World Directory of Minorities

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## Arará

### Profile

The Arará were known as great warriors and hunters and were largely nomadic; they depended on the ability of hunters to make ties and connections with groups of outsiders. Most of the Arará, also known as Ukarângmã (or the 'people of the red macaws'), reside in the Brazilian state of Pará. The Arará language is from the Karib family. The Apiacá of the Tocantins (extinct), the Yaruma (extinct) and the Ikpeng are all part of the same linguistic family. The Arará were traditionally polygamous and spouses were chosen based on traditional socio-cultural norms. They do not bury their dead and instead build funeral platform homes in the forest.

Since the 1970s Arará have been driven off their land and forced to live in three villages where the National Indian Foundation has allowed fundamentalist missionaries to come in, bringing rapid and profound changes to the Arará way of life.

The community was severely impacted by the development of the Trans-Amazonian highway. The Arará population in 1998 was only 195, but has grown slightly since then, the community is so small that all descendants can trace their ancestry to one woman. Much of community life takes place in the Laranjal village plaza, where there are three recognized groups occupying five homes.

### Historical context

The Arará were first contacted by the Portuguese in the 1800s. Bishop Dom Macedo Costa took several Arará people to Belém in 1873. Many of the early rubber tappers terrorized Arará communities. In 1961, the Arará were attacked by the Altamira police, in revenge for an attack on an animal owned by a non-indigenous person. Altamira was one of the hubs for the construction of the Trans-Amazonian highway in the 1970s and the Arará were severely impacted by a series of violent encounters during its construction. Arará land was sold by the National Indian Foundation to cattle ranchers. Illegal mahogany logging brought an increased number of settlers. In 1992 remaining land was threatened by flooding from the proposed Babaquara dam on the Xingu River and its tributaries, though the dam was subsequently shelved.

### Current issues

Forced relocation and decreasing land plots have threatened the Arará way of life, and many Arará are seeking work from neighbouring communities of settlers in order to gain greater material wealth for their families. The forced dispersion of the Arará is causing tension between two registered zones of Arará in the Cachoeira Seca do Iriri IT, a group of 56 Arará, and the Arara IT, where the bulk of the community resides.

Increased access to education has also further eroded the Arará culture. Since 1994 an increasing number of Portuguese-speaking teachers have arrived in the community. As a result, Portuguese is becoming the dominant language for young people, while most elders remain monolingual. The growing presence of missionaries is limiting the passing on of traditional knowledge and beliefs, and contributing to the forced integration of the Arará.

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